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Mothers' and Fathers' Influence on Occupational Status Attainment in Italy

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This article examines mothers' role in the transmission of social position in Italy, as measured by occupational status. Mother's occupation has not often been investigated as a factor on its own in the transmission of the social position to offspring – if at all, it is subsumed into a single indicator of family background or merged with fathers' occupation, on the claim that women traditionally did not have a full commitment to the labour market. In the case of Italy this choice could also have had its practical reason in the limited size of the samples available for mobility analyses. However, new pertinent data on Italy are now available, allowing us to assess mothers' contribution to the occupational status attainment process. Using data from 12 surveys, collected between 1985 and 2006 and covering 11.513 families with complete occupational information in fathers, mothers and respondents, our results show that both father's and mother's occupational status have a direct effect on respondent's occupational attainment. This is true for both men and women, although we do find significant gender-role modelling. The historical trends in mother's and father's effect are quite different: the influence of fathers is gradually decreasing and that of mothers gradually increasing. Omitting mothers from the analysis of occupational status attainment in Italy severely misrepresents structure and trends of the Italian social mobility regime: when we include mothers into the analysis we see that social reproduction is stronger and that the trend towards social fluidity is weaker.

Key words: social mobility, status attainment, mothers' occupation, trends in social stratification.

1. Introduction

The role of family background in status attainment is a well-known topic in social stratification research around the world, and Italy is no exception. Particularly during the last 20 years, many Italian researchers have devoted their attention to the study of the influence of parents' occupation

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and/or education on their offspring's educational or social position. The first Italian mobility study dates back as early as 1912, when Federico Chessa published *La trasmissione ereditaria delle professioni* (Chessa, 1912). In this work Chessa did some secondary analyses – mostly using Gini's index – on records of Italian men and their fathers covered by the Italian *Who's who* and the *Dictionary of National Biographies*, as well as on data from some 12.000 students of the German University. Some decades later, the statistician Livio Livi (1950) studied a sample of 636 men for testing a new measure of social mobility. Livi's data were initially considered by Lipset and Bendix (1959) to represent Italy in their comparative project on social mobility in industrial countries. However, as Lopreato (1965) recalls, either because of technical matters (the sample was too small and it did not adequately represent the Italian population), or because of substantial reasons (Italy did not fit the common pattern of industrialized nations, since the transmission of social positions was much more hereditary than in other countries), Italy was not included into the final comparison carried out by Lipset and Bendix, and also failed to appear in the authoritative review of the "first generation" of social mobility studies by Miller (1960).

The second generation of mobility studies started for Italy already in 1963, when Joseph Lopreato fielded the first Italian mobility survey, specifically designed to achieve comparability with international data. According to his data, Italy was no longer an exception among the western industrialized countries: one fifth of Italian men whose father was a manual worker had achieved a non-manual position, while the opposite path (from non-manual to manual positions) affects 26% of the sample (Lopreato, 1965) – broadly in line with Lipset and Bendix's findings for other industrial societies. However, when Lopreato's data were included in more expanded and often reanalysed collections of social mobility tables (Hazelrigg, 1974), the Italian mobility regime, as measured by father-to-son occupational similarities, still stood out at as relatively closed.

Two features of the Lopreato's 1963 study need to be underlined for our purposes. First, the sample included only male respondents; second, the position of the family of origin was inferred on the basis solely of father's occupation. In other words, women were completely excluded from the analysis, either in their role of respondents, or in that of the respondents' mothers. This is less a sign of a particularly Italian sexist choice than a common practice in mobility studies of that generation. For instance, women were excluded by design in the seminal 1962 US study on Occupational Change in a Generation, which has been reported on by Blau and Duncan (1967), in its 1973 replication reported on by Featherman and Hauser (1978), as well as in a host of international studies that followed these examples and constitute the so called second generation of social mobility studies (e.g. Broom, Jones, 1976) on Australia in 1965, Goldthorpe, Llewelyn and Payne

(1980) on Great Britain in 1973, and Jackson, Nutchinson and Iutaka (1973) on Ireland in 1973. The major argument supporting this choice was that women's participation in the labour market was far more sporadic and discontinuous than men's. This was complemented with the belief that the family was a homogeneous unit of analysis as for its class position, which could painlessly be derived from the occupation of the (male) head.

Before going into the details of this approach, let us highlight an important point. The specifics of the debate concerning the inclusion of women into mobility and stratification studies have already been recounted by several authors (see among others Barbagli, 1988; Bianco, Ricolfi, 1993; Korupp, Ganzeboom, Van der Lippe, 2002). However, we intend here to stress the empirically relevant details attached to it, since they are of direct importance to our aim of analysing the position of women (and especially of mothers) in the process of intergenerational status transfer.

The conventional view and its critics

The approach that exclude women from mobility and stratification studies – later referred to as the "conventional view" (Goldthorpe, 1983, 1984) – was actually challenged already at a very early stage, namely in 1964 by the American sociologists Walter Watson and Ernest Barth. These authors claim that «the patriarchal family model with husband working full time at an occupation, which underlies much of stratification theory, is not an adequate model for contemporary society» (Watson, Barth, 1964, p. 13). Their critique is mainly (but not only) focused on functionalist stratification theory and particularly on its assumption that the family is a «solidary unit of equivalent evaluation», or in other terms that all members of a family share the same position in the social hierarchy, and that this position is determined by the occupation of the male head of household. They also draw attention to a correlate of this belief, that is on the fact that occupation is considered to be the best indicator of social position, which determines that those who do not have a paid job (as was often the case of women at that time) are never taken into account in stratification studies. Watson and Barth report on American data according to which the nuclear family is no longer (if it has ever been) the most common type of family in their society, claiming that women's (and then wives') participation in the labour market has been steadily increasing over generations. Watson and Barth's article (1964) is of particular interest since it anticipates by 20 years some of the feminist theorist's critiques. The two authors were the first to bring the theory of stratification to its consequences as for the way women were considered, asking «1) why an occupational position makes a different contribution to system goals and maintenance and is differentially important social-

ly when occupied by a man than when occupied by a woman, and 2) why the contribution of an occupational position varies with the marital status of its female incumbent?» (*ibid.*, p. 15).

Acker (1973) follows this lead, effectively summarizing the assumptions of the conventional view: 1) the family is the unit of the stratification system; 2) the social position of the family is determined by that of the male head of the household; 3) women live in families and their status is determined by that of the male head; 4) since the family is a unit of equivalent evaluation – as Watson and Barth (1964) say –, a woman's status is made equal to that of her husband; 5) women determine their own status only when they do not live with a man; 6) actual inequalities in the labour market between women and men are of no concern for stratification theory.

The conventional view was widely challenged at the beginning of the Seventies, when more empirical evidence became available showing that women's occupation could matter in social stratification studies[1]. However, before being abandoned, it has had its defenders, and not only on the functionalist side. In particular Goldthorpe (1983) has stood to its defence by claiming that the criticism of intellectual sexism could be raised against the functionalist view of stratification, but that it did not affect the work of class analysts. In the functionalist view, Goldthorpe says, «the separation of sex roles within the family [...] emerges as a "response" to functional "needs" – such as those of protecting family solidarity, allowing clear definition of family status, or facilitating labour mobility» (*ibid.*, p. 468). On the other side, class analysts consider different gender roles as «the expression of a major form of inequality existing between the sexes» (*ibid.*). Moreover, according to this author, as long as we consider class analysis and as long as we agree that families are the basic unit of analysis of this kind of studies, taking into account women's own class position (when available) instead of their husband's class does not substantially alter the results in term of the overall mobility rate shown by a society. However, Goldthorpe (1983) acknowledges that there are some cases in which a woman's class position must be derived from her own occupational position; but these cases are only those in which the woman in question does not live in a conjugal family – i.e. when single, separated, divorced or widowed. Other than in these cases, taking women's occupation as an indicator of their class position makes sense only if we consider individuals instead of families as the unit of analysis, e.g. if we focus on issues directly linked to one's occupation (i.e. occupational mobility, occupational segregation, and the like).

Goldthorpe and Payne (1986) put forward empirical analyses showing that in England in the mid-Eighties women's social mobility is quite similar to men's social mobility. They also report on evidence supporting the hypothesis that a family is a community in which individuals do not act independently from one another: if we model the relationship between women's class destination and their class origin, they claim, we see that the relationship is best accounted for considering also fathers' and husband's class. That is, women's mobility depends on their fathers' social position, as well as their husbands'. According to Goldthorpe (1984), empirical analysis shows that even the dominance approach (see further below), as proposed by Erikson (1984) in order to overcome the empirical difficulties of building a family class position from the possibly different occupational classes of the two spouses, is «scarcely revelatory so far as questions of mobility are concerned».

On the other side of this debate stand those authors who claim that mobility studies have adopted a sexist approach by excluding women from the analysis (Acker, 1973). Among others, Stanworth (1984), Garnsey (1978) and Dale, Gilbert and Arber (1985) have claimed that women no longer constitute a marginal share of the labour market, nor that they always have lower jobs – in term of status, income and prospects – than their husbands. In particular Stanworth (1984), with a reference to Watson and Barth (1964), claims that families need not to be conceived as a homogeneous unit from the standpoint of class analysis, since women's contribution to the family class position is substantial and not always subordinate to that of their husbands. Her main argument is theoretical (or ideological) though, when she claims that «gender is implicated in the production and reproduction of the class system» and that we have to consider «the extent to which the subordinate class positions of women, married or otherwise, are shaped by the dynamics of class itself» (Stanworth, 1984, p. 165).

Empirical matters and theoretical choices

While criticising the conventional view as Stanworth does, Heath and Britten (1984) hold a more empirically grounded view. They focus on Goldthorpe's claim that cross-class families – i.e. those families in which one of the spouses holds a manual occupation (typically the husband) while the other has a non-manual job (typically the wife) – would make a difference if treated differently in mobility analyses. Goldthorpe's argument was that the number of such families is smaller than it appears, as lower non-manual occupations typically held by women (clerks, typists, shop assistants etc.) are like the manual jobs of their husbands in term of market and work relations (Goldthorpe, 1983). Heath and Britten agree with Goldthorpe, nonetheless they produce evidence that goes against his conclusions. Of particular interest is the claim put forward by these authors that class analysts should consider not only whether a woman has a current occupational position, but also her potential in the labour market: «If we take a more sociological view of the relations within the family, it may not be the fact of women's *current* labour market participation which is crucial but her *poten-*

tial for such participation. In other words, a married woman's class interests and class identity may be affected by the jobs open to her should she wish to enter or re-enter the labour market» (Heath, Britten, 1984, p. 481).

Heath and Britten propose that women's participation in the labour market is better understood if segmented into three distinct parts, i.e. semi-professional, office workers and manual or proletarian workers. They show that, since occupational mobility between these segments in a woman's occupational career is very rare, «the intermittent character of women's jobs is not a serious problem for class analysis» (*ibid.*, p. 489). This way a major argument against the inclusion of women into class analysis can be dropped, namely that the class position of the family can only be derived from that of the spouse «who has the fullest commitment to participation in the labour market» (Goldthorpe, 1983, p. 468), i.e. the male breadwinner. Turning to other kinds of socially relevant behaviours, Heath and Britten show that fertility and political behaviours can be better explained taking into account women's own occupational positions, rather than (solely) by those of their husbands'. Their final conclusion is then that «women's jobs do make a difference» (*ibid.*, p. 489).

Despite their enthusiasm for the case of women, these authors were aware that including women into mobility studies is not just (or not only) a matter of ideology, since it requires solving some non-trivial research problems. Can family background still be summarized in a single measure, in case wife and husband have different jobs? If this turns out to be difficult or impossible, should we give up studying families as the (homogeneous) unit of analysis in mobility and stratification processes, and just study individuals?

A first proposal for overcoming these empirical difficulties consists and thus for having families as the unit of stratification is the *joint classification* (Britten, Heath, 1983; Heath, Britten, 1984), according to which the class of the family is derived combining the class positions of both spouses by simply averaging (if a continuous measure is available) or considering all the combinations of wives' and husbands' occupations (if not). On the other side, Erikson (1984) – as already mentioned – proposed to assign the family to the class position derived from the occupation of the spouse who has the better (or dominant) position in the labour market. This *dominance* approach then concedes that it is no longer necessary to consider the husband as the dominant spouse: as long as the wife works and has a higher position in the labour market compared to that of her husband, her occupation can be the main indicator for deriving the class position of the whole family[2]. From the standpoint of the empirical analysis, the dominance approach implies that family status is a non-linear function of the occupation of spouses, while the joint classification implies that husband's and wife's status should have equal weights.

Of these two approaches, Erikson's *dominance* has been widely followed by mobility researchers in the international as well as in the Italian context. Actually the major national Italian mobility survey carried out in 1985, when the debate between defenders of and opponents to the conventional view was at its peak, included both male and female respondents, and investigated their social background with respect to both fathers' and mothers' education and occupation. Early as well as later reports on this survey have adopted the dominance approach both for the class position of the respondents' conjugal family and for their family of origin (De Lillo, 1988; Cobalti, 1988; Cobalti, Schizzerotto, 1994). However, in their application of the dominance model, Cobalti and Schizzerotto (1994) have noted that mothers' occupation was not of much influence, since the head of the family – as defined according to the dominance approach – was almost always the father. However this may be, what deserves to be stressed here is that Italian researchers acknowledged the importance of including not only women, but also mothers into class analysis, and collected their data accordingly.

Some unresolved issues

Having recalled the history of the debate on the inclusion of women into stratification studies, two additional points need to be made. First, while in modern social mobility studies (Breen, 2006) the inclusion of women as respondents into class analysis is no longer put into question, the role of women as mothers of the interviewees is still left in shadow. However, if we think that women's jobs make a difference in mobility studies, the same argument can be claimed in favour of the inclusion of mothers in such studies. If it is feasible and necessary to open up the conjugal family and study the contribution of its individual members to family status, this must also be the case for the family of origin.

Our second point is that, while the dominance and the joint classification approaches overcome in an effective way most of the empirical problems posed by the inclusion of women into class analysis, nonetheless they leave some theoretical issues unresolved. These issues concern the role of parents' occupation in the intergenerational transmission of the social position, and will be addressed later in our empirical analyses:

– If the social position of the family of origin is derived from the occupation of the dominant parent, does this imply that the non-dominant parent does not have any influence in the process of transmission of the social position to the offspring?

– Subsuming the contribution of mothers' occupation into a single indicator of social position, as we do according to the dominance as well as the joint classification approaches, are we concealing any gender-typing effect

inside the family, i.e. mothers having a greater influence on daughters as opposed to sons, and fathers having a greater influence on sons than on daughters?
– Can mother's occupational status be measured in the same way as father's status? Mothers may have very different jobs than fathers, as women's jobs generally are concentrated in fewer occupations than men's. Often used status measures such as ISEI (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, Treiman, 1992) were developed exclusively on male data; if status should be measured differently for men and women, the dominance and joint classification approaches may not be viable solutions, as they make the unit of measurement for fathers and mothers incomparable.

2. Research questions and hypotheses

In this article we have a twofold aim. First, our broader scope is to ascertain whether the influence of parents' occupational status on female and male respondents' occupational status in Italy has changed over the last century. In particular, we compare the influence of mothers' and fathers' occupations, thus tackling an issue that has never been dealt with before in the literature concerning this country. As a second point, we also wish to evaluate on empirical grounds some of the claims that have been made concerning the inclusion of women (and specifically of mothers) in stratification studies. Fortunately, we are finally in a position to be able to do so, for the Italian case, because new pertinent data have become available in large numbers with coverage of mother's occupation.

More specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions:
1. To what extent is mother's employment and occupational status reported in social mobility surveys?
2. *a*) What kind of jobs do mothers occupy, in comparison to fathers, and to their sons and daughters? *b*) In particular, to what extent are these jobs more concentrated in limited set of occupations, and *c*) are they on average of lower status than fathers' jobs?
3. How does mother's employment and mother's occupational status influence the occupational attainment of their offspring, relative to father's influence, and how does this differ between men and women, i.e. between sons and daughters?
4. To what extent do conclusions about the structure and trend in Italian social mobility depend on whether and how information on mother's occupation is included in the analysis?

To answer this questions, we follow Korupp, Ganzeboom and Van Der Lippe (2002) who have effectively summarized the state of the art with respect to common practices towards the inclusion of mothers into stratification and mobility studies, and their influence in the process of status attainment. These authors list six hypotheses, which will also guide the research reported here. According to the *conventional hypothesis*, mother's occupation can be safely discarded, since fathers provide all the relevant information. The logical counterpart of this view would be to investigate the mother's role in the status attainment process on her own account. For lack of a better term, we call this the *anti-conventional view*. The *dominance hypothesis* states that mothers matters as long as they have a higher occupational status than fathers; if so, the variable indicating the social background of the family of origin considers mother's occupation when it is higher than the father's occupation. Korupp, Ganzeboom and Van Der Lippe (2002) extend this argument by proposing that, as there may be a (strong) effect of the higher status parent, there may still be a (weaker) effect of the non-dominant parent. They label this approach as the *modified dominance* model and find it to be the best fitting among all the models they tested on a cross-national dataset with information on educational attainment of men and women in the Netherlands, Germany and the United States. The *joined hypothesis* derives from the joint classification approach as sketched above: here it is assumed that averaging mother's and father's occupational status using an equal weight, so that a single and balanced indicator of familiar status becomes available, is sufficient to represent family background. The last approach is named the *individual hypothesis*, and it models the feminist theorists' suggestion to let the individual be the unit of analysis. According to this hypothesis, then, the influence that mothers exert on their children – both female and male – is to be modelled separately from that of fathers, because by means of a paid job women have not only gained financial resources but also power within the family.

One additional hypothesis completes the picture, i.e. the one implying that mothers matter more for daughters, while fathers matter more for sons. This *gender-role hypothesis* is based on studies that show how children are oriented towards their same-gender parent when building their identity and expectations about their own role in society (Smith, Self, 1980; Starrels, 1992; Huttunen, 1992; Updegraff, McHale, Crouter, 1996). Like with the dominance approach, Korupp, Ganzeboom and Van Der Lippe (2002) widen this approach by proposing that a strong same-gender parental effect does not exclude the existence of a weaker (but still substantial) different-gender parent effect. We will test this hypothesis with the individual hypothesis, as it leads to a model in which both parents' occupation exerts an influence on the offspring's outcome.

3. Data and measurement

Our data are taken from the collection of Italian stratification and mobility data, harmonized by the authors as part of the International Stratification and Mobility File (ISMF) (Ganzeboom, Treiman, 2008). From the total collection of 21 studies (Meraviglia, Ganzeboom, 2006), we take the 12 studies that contain a measure of mother's occupation. Table 1 lists them together with their ISMF acronyms. These studies contain the two best known and more often used Italian surveys on social mobility, namely the 1985 *Indagine sulla mobilità sociale*, and the 1997 wave of the *Indagine longitudinale sulle famiglie italiane* (ILFI). To these we add the data coming from two rounds of the European Social Survey (2002 and 2004, in fact fielded respectively in 2003 and 2006), and two surveys collected in 2005. The University of Turin – Osservatorio del Nord Ovest, fielded the first one, while the second is part of a national research project (PRIN)[3] on the social desirability of occupations in Italy, carried out by a consortium of academic institutions lead by the University of Eastern Piedmont. Finally we also include data coming from the Panel Survey of Italian Households' Income and Wealth, carried out by the Bank of Italy every two years. We selected all those waves that had relevant information on parents' occupations (1993, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004). These data comprise repeated observation from the same household; these were re-weighed to correct for duplication (Meraviglia, Ganzeboom, 2007). It is important to note that the (re-weighted) Bank of Italy data contain about half of our observations, so that it might be appropriate to test whether our results are crucially dependent upon their presence in the data set.

With the exception of the social desirability study – whose sample is representative of the Italian employed population – all these surveys contain a probability sample of the Italian population in working age (21-64). The Bank of Italy data also features a cross-section part, with information concerning all members of the sampled household.

All occupations in the data set have been harmonized using the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO, 1968 and 1988). These codes were then converted into the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) of occupational status created by Ganzeboom and colleagues (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, Treiman, 1992; Ganzeboom, Treiman, 1996). This conversion procedure and the use of a continuous status scale make it possible to compare occupations coded in different ways – from detailed coding (either in ISCO88 or the categories of the 1985 Italian scale of occupational stratification) to crude codes (8 or 13 categories, but combined with other available information on industry and employment status), as they appear in the Bank of Italy data. Table 1 shows how occupation has been measured in each survey.

Respondents have been asked to report on their occupation referring to

Tab. 1. Twelve studies on intergenerational social mobility in Italy

Year	Title	ISMF	Occupation source code
1985	*Indagine nazionale sulla mobilità sociale* (National Survey on Social Mobility, Barbagli *et al.*, 1985)	ita85	93 categories of the Italian scale of occupational stratification
1997	*Indagine longitudinale sulle famiglie italiane* (Longitudinal Survey on Italian Households, Schizzerotto, 1997)	ita97	ISCO88 codes
1993 1995 1998 2000 2002 2004	[Panel] Survey on Italian Households' Income and Wealth (Bank of Italy, www.bancaditalia.it)	ita93b ita95b ita98b ita00b ita02b ita04b	8 occupational categories, sector of activity, position in employment (self employed/dependent worker)
2003 2006	European Social Survey round 1 & 2 (www.europeansocialsurvey.org)	ita03e ita06e	ISCO88 codes
2005	National Barometer (Osservatorio del Nord Ovest, University of Turin, www.nordovest.org)	ita05	13 occupational categories, sector of activity, position in employment (self employed/dependent worker)
2005	Survey on the Social Grading of Occupations (Bianco *et al.*, 2005)	ita05c	ISCO88 codes

Source: http://www.fsw.vu.nl/hbg.ganzeboom/ismf

their current or last job. Note that we include in our analysis also occupational information for those who are currently not gainfully employed. As we will show, father's and mother's influences do not crucially depend on current employment status of the respondents: previously held occupations, which include many male and female early retirees, as well as women who have withdrawn from the labour market, are just as useful to look at family status as present occupations. For parents, the information either pertains to their "usual occupation when you were growing up" or to "their occupation when they were [respondent's] age". This latter format was used in the Bank of Italy data, while some variety of the first format prevails in the other data sets. Unfortunately, none of the data sets refers to "parental occupation ever", which would have been our own preferred format, as it would

bring in much more information particularly about mothers, making it possible to tackle the question whether the jobs held by mothers before respondents grew up have made a difference.

We selected for initial analysis the subset of cases with valid information on both mother's and father's occupation, which include about a third of cases. Since our focus is on the role of mother's occupation in the intergenerational transmission of social position relative to that of fathers, it seems reasonable to test all competing hypotheses on this limited sub-sample. On the other hand, it does not seem reasonable to exclude two thirds of the cases altogether, nor from a substantive neither from a methodological point of view. The excluded cases may not come at random, and this might bias our results as well. For this reason, we will compare the results obtained on the subset of cases for which we have a valid mothers' *and* fathers' occupation code with those obtained on sub-samples defined by the availability of either information. This will enable to ascertain whether our conclusions substantially depend on how we select the cases included into the analysis.

Results

Our total sample includes 46.117 valid cases in working age range (20-64 years old), about equally distributed over men and women. Table 2 displays how these cases are distributed over the 12 data sets, and how often we observe a valid occupation code among fathers, mothers, male and female respondents.

Tab. 2. Employment situation for fathers, mothers, men and women (%)

Study	Valid occupation code				Currently employed		Total	
	Fathers	Mothers	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1 ita85	90,5	45,0	90,9	63,2	77,3	36,0	2.308	2.364
2 ita93b	90,6	35,2	86,4	48,8	72,1	38,2	2.609	2.710
3 ita95b	80,1	39,7	86,2	51,1	69,3	40,9	2.465	2.564
4 ita97	90,5	48,8	88,9	75,4	70,8	43,1	4.051	4.297
5 ita98b	83,5	38,5	85,7	52,1	70,5	42,6	1.797	1.909
6 ita00b	75,5	40,3	88,2	53,1	73,8	44,6	2.023	2.054
7 ita02b	72,2	42,3	88,3	53,7	73,6	45,3	1.975	2.038
8 ita03e	86,8	37,9	91,9	70,3	74,1	49,0	415	513
9 ita04b	70,1	43,3	88,9	56,6	74,7	48,1	2.189	2.233
10 ita05	77,2	39,6	93,1	81,0	70,9	41,8	1.139	1.356
11 ita05c	90,0	45,5	98,8	97,9	89,8	88,9	1.182	757
12 ita06e	92,5	33,1	85,5	65,6	71,0	45,2	585	583
Total	*83,2*	*42,0*	*88,9*	*61,6*	*73,4*	*43,9*	*22.739*	*23.378*

Note: the ita05c survey was held only among (male and female) respondents with recent attachment to the labor market and was then excluded from current-employment calculations.

4. Employment rates

The first issue we address is the degree to which our data in practice report on the employment and occupations of female and male respondents, and of mothers and fathers. As for male respondents, our 12 data sources are rather homogeneous: by and large around 89% of the men in the selected age range have a valid occupation code, the main exceptions being students and early pensioners. For women, the number of cases with a valid occupation code is more variable, ranging between 36% in the oldest survey and around 46% in the most recent surveys that included a general population sample. The greater variability shown by women is determined by three different factors: (1) question format (whether and how previous occupations were included), (2) sample selection (as we noted, the ita05c survey covers only persons recently active in the labour market), and (3) the long-term trend towards an increasing employment rate of women in Italy that emerged between 1985 and 2006. In all surveys it is possible to restrict the analysis to women gainfully employed at the time of survey, thus ensuring a greater comparability of the data sources, but also running the risk of losing statistical power and missing information on intergenerational transfers for the non-employed.

In order to ascertain whether our data offer a valid representation of women's participation in the labour market, we compare our data set with data coming from the 2001 Census and from the Labour Force Surveys (1993-2007), both carried out by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). As shown in figure 1 and 2, the trends we find in our data prove to be very close to those described by ISTAT. In particular, figure 1 shows that our data moderately overestimates the employment of women in the younger age groups by a few percentage points. Otherwise, figure 1 shows the strikingly low participation of Italian women after age 45 and also that our data contain valid occupation information for many of this women. In figure 2 we see that our data follow the national trend remarkably close, as it described by the 2001 Census data, the only exception being the 2005 Social Desirability of Occupations Survey, which over-represents employed women by design.

Considering again table 2, when we move to the information on fathers and mothers we see that the data sources are fairly homogeneous in representing their employment status: by and large around 83% of the fathers and 42% of the mothers have a valid occupation code in the data. These figures are somewhat lower for the Bank of Italy data (in particular for fathers), which seems a natural consequence of adopting the question format on "occupation when your parents were [respondent's] age". Other than by question format, missing values in parental occupation occur because of deceased or unknown parents, or a refusal/don't know answer by the

Fig. 1. Women with a valid ISCO code and women currently employed on the total female population by age range

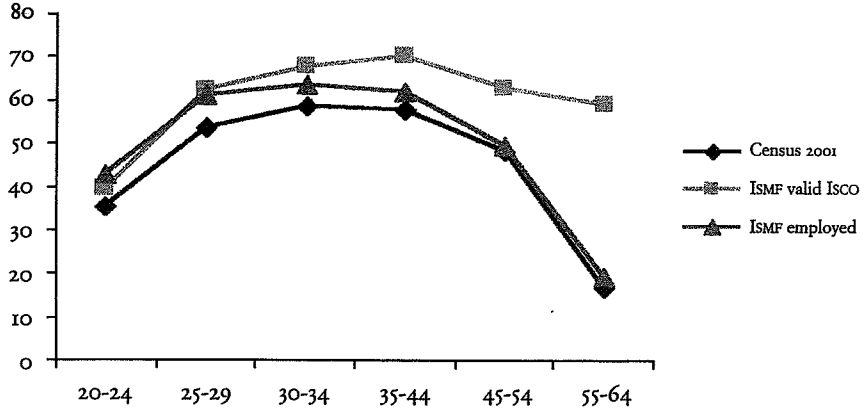
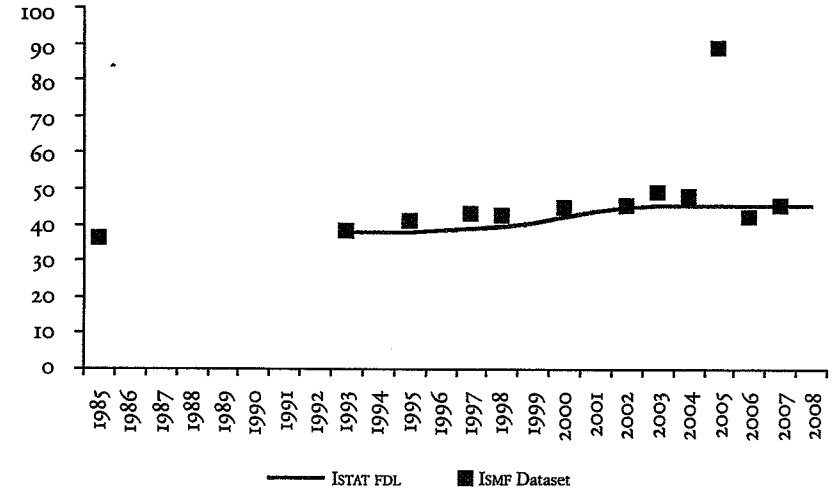


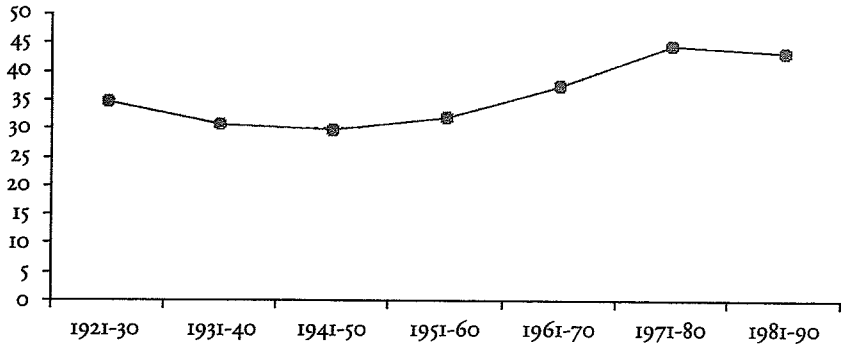
Fig. 2. Women's employment rate according to the data set and to ISTAT Labour Force Surveys, 1985-2007 (valid age range)



respondents. With the exception of the Bank of Italy surveys, for fathers this amounts to about 10% missing information – which is quite similar to intergenerational mobility studies held in other countries.

As for the mother, a missing value on her occupation may not necessarily mean that she was not in gainful employment in the period the survey question referred to, and even less so that she has never been in gainful employment. Missing values may also arise because the survey instrument only asked for mother's employment when respondent was at a specified age (14 years of age), like the two European Social Surveys did. Then there are cases in which respondents may not know or remember their mother's occupation, or refuse to report on it because they regard it as irrelevant in the context of the survey. Due to these variations in question format, the figures in table 2 hide somewhat an important feature of the data and, for that matter, of Italy itself: the number of ever-employed mothers is clearly on the rise. This is nicely shown in figure 3, where we see that between respondents born in the Thirties and the Eighties the percentage of mothers who have been reported to have an occupation increases from 30 to 45%. While the data do not allow us to know exactly when these mothers worked, nor whether that would make a difference to our conclusions, the pattern itself appears to be an argument in favour of the relevance of our research topic. Moreover we also note that the number of mothers for whom we have valid information on occupation hovers between 33 and 45%; compared to what we see for female respondents at the time of survey, this rate is not dramatically lower. Taken by itself, this patterns rebuts one important assumption of the conventional view, namely that in the past – and in particular for some decades after the World War II – women's employment always has been episodic and inessential for stratification studies.

Fig. 3. Mothers with a valid occupation code in the data set by respondents' cohort (% of respondents in the valid age range)



5. Relative occupational status of fathers, mothers, male and female respondents

The second issue we consider is the relative status of fathers, mothers, women and men in the 12 surveys. As already mentioned, the status meas-

ure used in our analyses is the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI), that was developed by Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman (1992) as the scaling of occupation that best represents occupation as the institution that transmits someone's educational credentials into his earnings. To develop this index Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman (1992) used only data on men (from 17 countries), but the authors' claim is to be adequate for women as well.

Tab. 3. Mean occupational status (ISEI) for fathers, mothers, men and women (%)

Study	Valid occupations				Families with complete information			
	Fathers	Mothers	Men	Women	Fathers	Mothers	Men	Women
1 ita85	37,4	28,7	43,6	44,7	36,1	27,3	43,5	43,3
2 ita93b	35,5	35,3	41,9	43,5	34,2	34,4	43,4	41,9
3 ita95b	35,6	35,8	41,5	44,1	34,7	34,9	42,0	43,2
4 ita97	35,9	34,4	41,9	41,4	35,8	33,1	43,1	41,5
5 ita98b	37,0	38,4	43,1	45,6	37,4	37,4	44,7	46,6
6 ita00b	36,5	38,5	42,2	45,2	37,6	37,9	43,9	46,0
7 ita02b	36,6	38,2	41,3	45,0	37,0	37,0	43,3	44,7
8 ita03e	40,6	41,9	42,3	41,2	42,0	42,4	42,7	41,3
9 ita04b	36,6	38,3	41,4	44,8	38,4	37,9	43,0	45,4
10 ita05	38,5	39,4	44,0	43,7	39,2	38,8	45,2	46,4
11 ita05c	38,4	35,6	44,6	45,5	40,0	35,9	46,0	45,3
12 ita06e	38,7	42,4	43,0	42,9	42,0	42,5	45,4	44,0
Total	*36,6*	*35,8*	*42,4*	*43,7*	*36,8*	*34,9*	*43,6*	*43,6*
N	38.357	16.109	20.203	14.394	1.1513	11.513	6.227	5.286

The left four panels of table 3 compare the average ISEI of the occupation reported for fathers, mothers, male and female respondents, while in the four columns on the right side we restrict the comparison to those families who have a valid occupation code for all incumbents (fathers, mothers and respondents). On both sides of the table we see a pattern that may be surprising to the novice, but which is actually similar to that found in some earlier stratification studies[4]: the average status of mothers' jobs is *not* lower than that of fathers, while in the case of respondents the occupational status of women is on average even decidedly higher (1,3 points, t = 8,5) than men's. There are several possible explanations for this finding. First and foremost, it may be due to selectivity: women in lower status occupations have disproportionally left the labour market and have rather resorted to homemaking tasks. Second, it may be that occupations that are frequently held by women indeed have above-average status. Teaching, nursing, clerical and sales jobs are dominated by women, and while these jobs are not in the highest status rungs, they all may be regarded as above average. Finally,

the relatively high score for women may be due to the fact that the specific measure adopted here, i.e. ISEI, was developed on men: this implied that status scores for female dominated jobs (like nursing) were estimated using data of male incumbents of these jobs (like male nurses), who may be atypically high in terms of education and income.

The results offer substantial evidence in favour of the first explanation: women who have stopped working, but for whom we still have occupational status information, have on average more than 7 point lower ISEI than employed women, and this difference remains stable when controlling for age (results not shown in table). As for the other two competing interpretations, the data provide convincing evidence that ISEI cannot be a particularly bad measure for the status of women's and in particular of mother's occupation. The quality of the ISEI measure is strongly validated by its correlation with criterion variables, in particular education: as we will see below, women's occupations are more closely related to their education than is the case of men, which would not be the case is occupational status was badly measured.

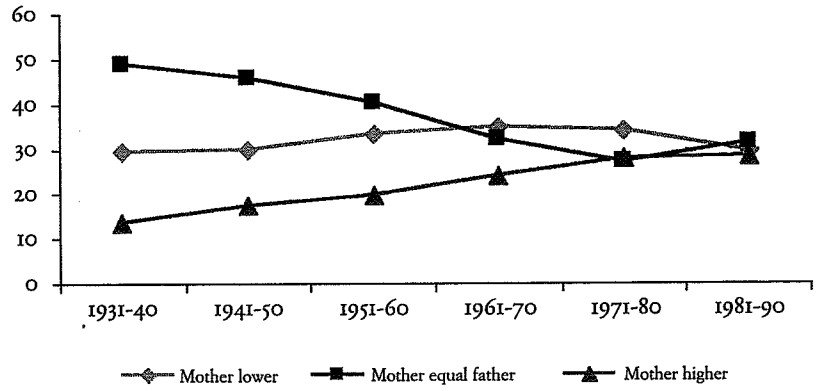
Tab. 4. Mother's occupational status (4 groups) by father's occupational status (4 groups)

	M-ISEI				
F-ISEI	10-20	20-40	40-60	60-90	Total
10-20	1.395	318	108	6	1.827
20-40	1.285	4.132	1.265	119	6.801
40-60	320	835	3.101	566	4.822
60-90	16	93	484	666	1.259
Total	*3.016*	*5.378*	*4.958*	*1.357*	*14.709*

One of our research questions concerns whether and how often fathers have a higher occupational status than mothers. First, our data show that fathers' and mothers' occupations are quite highly correlated (0,69); however such a high correlation may still imply substantial discrepancies between mothers and fathers: as shown in table 4, when grouped into four broad categories, 35% of the parental couples are not consistent. Actually the marginal distributions of the table are somewhat asymmetric: mother are more frequently found in the lowest and highest groups (which are dominated by farm workers and teachers, respectively), while father are more frequently found in the one but lowest category (these are primarily skilled manual workers). On the other hand, we do not see an asymmetric association pattern: it is equally likely that mothers have higher occupations than fathers, than vice versa.

In figure 4 we consider this issue in a historical perspective and use detailed ISEI scores to distinguish three groups: mother higher than father, father higher than mother, and father and mother equal in ISEI. The pattern is a regular one; particularly worth of note is that the share of mothers with a higher status than fathers has increased over time (as indicated by respondent's birth cohort) at the expense, so to say, of mothers with an equally high (or low) status than fathers. On the other hand the traditional combination of a mother with a lower status than father remains stable over the years.

Fig. 4. Trend over time of mother's occupational status in respect to father's by respondent's birth cohort (valid age range; cohort 1911-29 excluded because data too sparse)



If we combine this finding with the increasing mothers' employment rate over time, shown by figure 3, this suggests that not only mothers increased their participation in the labour market, but also that they gained a better status in comparison to that of their spouses. This conclusion remains valid even when we consider that the higher score for mothers stems from the fact that women increasingly entered the labour market in clerical positions, which have on average a higher socio-economic status than manual occupations. It may be true, as claimed by Goldthorpe (1983) and Stanworth (1984), that those positions might not be different in terms of class analysis from those of their husbands in manual jobs, since many (female-dominated) non-manual jobs do not enjoy better work or market conditions than those accessed by (male) manual workers. However, the divide between manual and non-manual occupations still matters on many other respects, including educational prospects, safety and mortality rates – all issues that are adequately reflected by the socio-economic status of occupations.

6. The distribution of male and female occupations

The analysis of similarities and dissimilarities between mothers' and fathers' occupations sheds more light on the issues we debated in the Introduction, particularly on the claim that the variety of mothers' occupations is much more restricted than that of fathers': women (and thus mothers), it has been said, are concentrated in few jobs, such as teachers, clerks, shop assistants, and the like. In order to ascertain whether this claim is supported by our data, we selected the most frequent occupations among mothers and fathers, as well as among female and male respondents. The selection procedure was as follows: first, we clustered all occupations by incumbent into groups defined by the ISCO68 second digit; then we built a list for each incumbent of the most frequent occupational titles by taking into account only those which scored above 2%; finally we merged the four lists (regarding mothers, fathers, female and male respondents), obtaining a total of 23 occupational groups and then calculated the prevalence of these groups. The result is shown in table 5.

Considering the list of the most frequent occupations for parents, we find that mothers are as widespread over occupation groups as fathers, thus disconfirming – as far as our data are concerned – the claim on mothers' concentration in fewer occupational positions than fathers. Eight occupational titles have made the 2% mark for mothers, as many as for fathers; moreover, the first three groups are the same and occur in the same order of importance for the two parents: from the most frequent to the less frequent occupational title, we find unskilled manual workers, agricultural workers and clerical workers. The relative share of these three occupations is roughly the same for the two parents: unskilled manual workers score around one fourth of both fathers and mothers; agricultural workers are more numerous among mothers (one sixth against one eighth), while clerical workers are found to have more or less the same share. Two more occupational titles, i.e. farmers and working proprietors in the trade sector, are found both for mothers and fathers, again with more or less the same share.

We then see that teachers are more frequent among women (either female respondents or mothers), while managerial occupations are much more frequent among male respondents and fathers. Clerical jobs are clearly more frequent among respondents than among parents; fathers have a clerical job more often than mothers, but the opposite is true for female and male respondents. Then manual jobs are less frequent among women, while occupations in the trade sector (working proprietors in shops, salesmen, shop assistants etc.) are on the whole as frequent among respondents as among parents. The share held by farmers is similar for respondents and parents; what dramatically changes is the share of agricultural workers, now negligible but much more frequent among parents, especially mothers.

Tab. 5. Most frequent occupations (ISCO68 codes up to 1st and 2nd digit) for mothers, fathers, women and men in the data set after age selection

ISCO68 code (1-2 digits)	ISCO68 category	Mothers	Fathers	Women	Men
1300	Teachers	8,2	1,5	10,7	2,5
1900	Professional, technical and related workers	0,9	1,3	2,0	1,5
1000	Other professional, technical and related workers	0,1	0,4	1,4	1,7
2100	Managers	1,2	3,2	1,9	4,6
2000	Other managerial and administrative workers	0,1	0,9	0,5	1,6
3200	Stenographers, typists and card- and tape-punching machine operators	1,2	0,5	2,3	0,7
3300	Book keepers, cashiers and related workers	1,4	1,1	4,0	1,9
3900	Other clerks	8,9	10,5	18,6	15,5
3000	Other clerical workers	1,5	3,2	2,7	5,2
4100	Working proprietors (wholesale and retail trade)	8,4	8,3	5,3	5,4
4500	Salesmen, shop assistants and related workers	3,1	1,4	6,1	2,6
4000	Other sales workers	1,6	1,9	1,9	3,3
5400	Maids and related housekeeping service workers	2,8	0,1	4,2	0,7
5500	Building caretakers, charworkers, ricleaners and related workers	1,4	0,5	2,0	0,6
5000	Other service workers	2,6	2,3	4,4	3,0
6100	Farmers	8,1	9,2	1,7	2,1
6200	Agricultural and animal husbandry workers	17,3	12,0	4,1	3,4
6000	Other agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters	0,6	1,0	0,4	0,6
7900	Tailors, dressmakers, sewers, upholsterers and related workers	1,7	0,4	2,1	0,2
9500	Bricklayers, carpenters and other construction workers	0,1	4,0	0,2	5,7
9800	Transport equipment operators	0,0	2,2	0,2	3,5
9900	Manual workers n.e.c.	24,2	25,0	16,3	22,4
7000					
8000					
9000	Other manual workers	4,6	9,0	7,1	11,6
N		16.127	38.394	14.451	20.312
Entropy		3,53	3,61	3,85	3,78
EQ		0,92	0,92	0,95	0,93

We can formalize the concentration in ISCO68 categories by nominal dispersion measures. If we calculate the entropy index (Shannon, 1948; McGill, 1954) on these four distributions, we actually see that mothers' occupations are a bit more concentrated than fathers', although the difference is rather small. According to another relative dispersion index, EQ (Leti, 1983; Marradi, 1993)[5], mothers are as concentrated as fathers, while women show a slightly more balanced distribution than men. For the sake of completeness, we have also calculated dissimilarity indices between the occupations of fathers and mothers (20%), of fathers and men (21,7%), of mothers and women (30,7%) and of female and male respondents (28,3%). It is important to note that the greatest similarity arises for the parents, not for the respondents, thus disconfirming once again the claim that mothers' jobs are concentrated in few positions, and then that therefore mother's occupation is necessarily less influential than fathers' on offspring's mobility outcomes.

7. Father's and mothers influence on respondents' occupational status attainment

Table 6 shows the OLS regression models we estimated on the sub-sample of cases with valid information on both fathers' and mothers' occupations. Here we recall our hypotheses as we outlined them above and as they are tested by these models:

- the conventional model, in which the status of the family of origin is derived from father's occupation;
- the anti-conventional model, where the status of the family of origin is derived from mother's occupation;
- the joined model, in which father's and mother's occupational status is averaged;
- the dominance model, according to which the status of the family of origin is that of either parent who has a dominant status on the labour market;
- the modified dominance model, which takes into account not only the dominant, but also the non-dominant parent;
- the individual model, i.e. the one in which father's and mother's occupation are considered as having an autonomous influence on respondent's occupational status. This will be our baseline model for comparing the results of the other models.

Respondent's gender, age and education are included into all models. The independent variables concerning parents' occupation (in whatever form), as well as respondent's education, are considered to have a differential contribution over time and for the two genders. Three variables in the analysis have been standardized either to a dichotomy or with respect to their range:

Tab. 6. Occupational attainment by mother's and father's occupation for men and women with complete occupational information on father and mother (N = 11.513)

Constant	Range	A	B	C	D	E	F
		Conventional model	Anti-conventional model	Joined model	Dominance model	Modified dominance	Individual model
		41,525	42,294	33,530	33,564	33,057	41,675
		(112,6)	(110,9)	(36,9)	(37,2)	(36,0)	(108,3)
FEMALE	0,1	0,339	0,406	1,028	0,449	0,568	0,558
		(0,8)	(0,9)	(1,3)	(1,0)	(-0,6)	(1,2)
AGE	0,1	10,994	10,979	11,186	11,261	11,235	11,220
		(19,7)	(19,7)	(20,1)	(20,2)	(20,2)	(20,2)
FEMALE* AGE		-1,876	-1,941	-2,109	-2,078	-2,239	-2,208
		(-2,2)	(-2,3)	(-2,5)	(-2,5)	(-2,7)	(-2,6)
TIME	0,1	-6,446	-7,321	-5,283	-4,178	-4,624	-6,621
		(-16,5)	(-17,9)	(-4,3)	(-3,4)	(-3,7)	(-15,9)
P1ISEI	10-90	0,221		0,116	0,199	0,184	0,204
	Cent.	(10,7)		(9,8)	(11,9)	(6,9)	(8,8)
P1ISEI*		-0,032		-0,008	-0,004	-0,047	-0,048
FEMALE		(-2,1)		(-0,9)	(-0,3)	(-2,3)	(-2,6)
P1ISEI*		-0,084		-0,026	-0,062	-0,126	-0,140
TIME		(-2,9)		(-1,6)	(-2,2)	(-3,3)	(-4,4)

(continued)

Tab. 6. (continuation)

Constant	Range	A	B	C	D	E	F
		Conventional model	Anti-conventional model	Joined model	Dominance model	Modified dominance	Individual model
			mother	equal		subordin.	mother
P2ISEI	10-90		0,125	0,116		0,040	0,032
	Cent.		(6,3)	(9,8)		(1,4)	(1,4)
P2ISEI*			0,002	-0,008		0,034	0,031
FEMALE			(0,1)	(-0,9)		(1,4)	(1,7)
P2ISEI*			0,039	-0,026		0,085	0,083
TIME			(1,4)	(-1,6)		(2,0)	(2,7)
EDUCYR	0,21	2,134	2,290	2,113	2,146	2,106	2,111
	Cent.	(28,5)	(30,5)	(27,2)	(28,2)	(27,2)	(27,2)
EDUCYR*		0,255	0,181	0,216	0,196	0,212	0,212
FEMALE		(4,1)	(2,9)	(3,4)	(3,3)	(3,4)	(3,3)
EDUCYR*		0,039	-0,149	-0,014	-0,006	0,000	-0,012
TIME		(0,4)	(-1,4)	(-0,1)	(-0,5)	(0,0)	(-0,1)
		father		equal	dominant	dominant	father
Adj R^2	0,432	0,431	0,437	0,433	0,437	0,439	

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients with T-values in parentheses. Column A shows unit of measurement for main effects. (0,1) denotes dichotomized, 0,1 means range-standardized. P1: First parent. P2: Second parent. See text for further explanation.

– FEMALE is a 0,1 dichotomy;
– TIME varies between 0 (1985 survey) and 1 (2006 survey);
– AGE varies from 0 (20 years) to 1 (64 years).

The other variables have the following form:

– measures of ISEI are all in the range from 10 (lowest rung occupation, corresponding to farm labourers) to 90 (highest rung occupation, judges); F-ISEI and M-ISEI refer respectively to fathers' and mothers' occupation, while P1ISEI and P2ISEI refer more generically to the ISEI of the first and second parent.
– EDUCYR measure the level of education and ranges between 0 (no education) and 21 (post-graduate university training).

The ISEI scores and EDUCYR are centred in the analysis, i.e. expressed as deviations from their overall mean. This coding scheme makes it easy to interpret the interaction terms, as well as the intercept terms.

Due to these conversions, in all models of table 6 the overall constant refers to low educated male respondents of 20 years of age in 1985, who have fathers and mothers with the lowest possible status (i.e., farm labourers). As for the main effects, in general we see that working women at career beginnings have marginally better occupations than men, and that occupational status increases considerably with age, but declines over historical time. Each year of respondent's education increases occupational status by about 2 points, and both mother's and father's occupations promote respondent's occupational attainment. Note that the negative effect of time of study should be interpreted against the backdrop of the strong influence of the status variables – actually the negative coefficient concerning time needs primarily to be understood as a diploma-inflation effect: going from 1985 to 2006, respondents get to a gradually lower occupational status for the same level of education.

Considering the individual model (column F in tab. 6), we see that father's influence on offspring's status is strong and significant (0,20), while mother's influence is weak and not significant (0,03). These effects are the expected values for men in the first study, i.e. 1985, and they tell us nothing about how the influence of mothers' and fathers' occupations changed over the period of observation. For father's influence there is a significant interaction with respondent's gender, while in mother's case it is not significant. This means that the gender-role model is not fully confirmed: fathers are less influential for women (0,204-0,048 = 0,156) than for men, while mother is more influential on her daughter's outcome (0,032 + 0,031 = 0,063), however the latter interaction is at the edge of significance ($t = 1,7$, while 1,64 is the critical value for $p < 0,05$, one-sided). At least in the earliest period covered by the surveys, father's influence is still dominant in occupational attainment of both women and men. However, although this would seem to go in favour of the conventional view, we have to consider that this picture

has changed over time, as we can see from the significant time interaction terms for both father's and mother's occupation: the influence of fathers decreases by -0,140 over the total period 1985-2006, thus reaching the value of 0,060 in 2006, while the coefficient for mothers increases by 0,083, reaching the value of 0,116 in 2006. Both trends are strongly significant. Taken together, these interactions imply that for the most recent surveys the effects of fathers and mothers are more or less balanced for both men and women. We finally note that the individual model F is the best fitting one in the table, with about 44% of explained variance.

Let's now consider the contribution of parents' to respondents' status as estimated by the other models. According to the conventional model (column A), father's influence is slightly stronger than in the individual model; it is again more relevant for sons than for daughters, although here the distance between them is smaller than in the individual model (0,221 for men, 0,189 for women). Over the period of observation, fathers' influence decreases, however at a slower rate than implied by the individual model (-0,084 against -0,140). In sum, it may seem that the inference we can draw on the basis of the conventional view is not substantially different from that of the baseline model. However not only has the conventional model less explanatory power (42% explained variance), but were we to rely entirely on it, without any further knowledge drawn from the individual model, we would conclude that parental influence on respondents' status is pretty strong, and that it declined only very slowly over the last 21 years.

We get a different picture when we move to the anti-conventional model (column B). On the whole, this model accounts for as much variance as the conventional model. Mother's influence is projected to be weaker in the starting year, although significant (0,125, compared to a value of 0,221 for fathers in the conventional model); however it increases – though very slowly – over time (0,039, not significant) and has the same weight for daughters and sons. Respondents' education is more influential here than in the previous model; in all other respects the conventional and anti-conventional models look quite similar. In some sense this is a quite remarkable result given the claims of irrelevance of mother's occupation on respondent's status and given the common practice to exclude mothers from the stratification analysis. We will return to this point in the conclusions below.

The joined model (column C) considers again information concerning both parents, while summarizing it into a single indicator of parental status. The measure is constructed as the sum of father's and mother's occupational status, and can therefore be interpreted as an equality constraint on the effects of the parental status. This average effect on respondent's status is smaller than for father in the conventional model, but higher than for mother in the anti-conventional model. Its influence is not significantly different for male and female respondents, and it decreases over time, though not

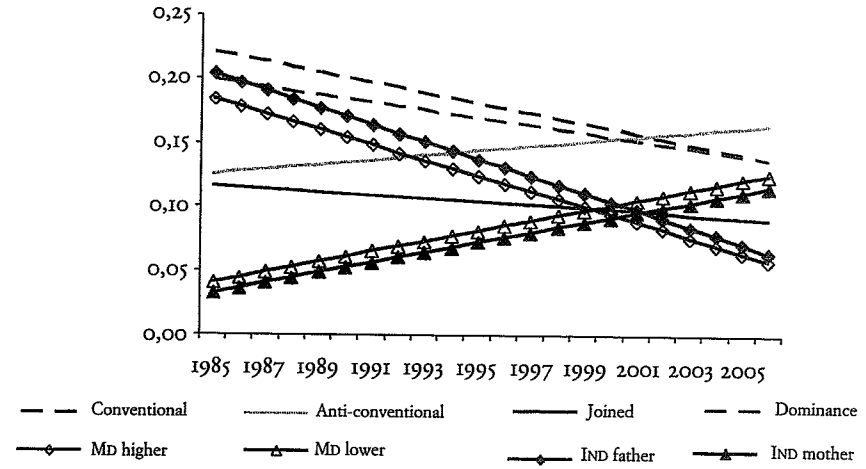
reaching significance. However the explained variance (43,7%) is significantly higher than in both the conventional and anti-conventional models.

Thus far, and not considering the individual model, it seems that including mothers' occupations into our analysis weakens the results: compared to the conventional model, in the anti-conventional and the joined model the status of the family of origin seems to be less influential, fairly stable over the period of observation and not substantially different for sons and daughters. While the anti-conventional model has received no application thus far, and we ourselves treat it as nothing more than the logical counterpart of the conventional model, the joined model refers to one of the solutions that have been proposed to overcome the practical difficulties of including women into stratification analysis, while not disrupting the unit of analysis, i.e. the family. Let's move one step further and analyse the empirical outcome of the other remedy, namely the dominance approach (column D). Here the influence of the family of origin is stronger (0,199), while not being really different for daughters and sons; nonetheless we see again a significantly declining trend over the 21 years of observation.

Interestingly enough, as we see in the modified dominance model (column E) and in line with the findings of Korupp, Ganzeboom and Van Der Lippe (2002), the dominant parent does not account for all the influence of the family of origin. The parent with the lowest status has a very low influence (0,040), which does not differ according to respondents' gender; however its influence increases over time as we go from 1985 to 2006. The explained variance in this model almost equals that of the joined model, while adding some insight into the process of status transfer across generations. The modified dominance model is close to the individual model; while not being more parsimonious, it allows us to consider the intergenerational transmission of status from a complementary point of view.

In conclusion, the single best model for our data is the individual model F, which treats father's and mother's occupational status independently. This model suggests that, at the beginning of the period we study (1985), mother's status had little impact on respondents' occupational status, in particular for men. However, the impact of mother's occupation grew in importance over time, for women and for men: by 2006, the influence of father and mother is about equal. Observe that these conclusions would not have been obtained, had we used a dataset that included only fathers, or chosen another model to assess the relative impact of mother and fathers. Had we restricted ourselves to fathers only, we would have seen a downward trend in father's effect; the joined model would have underestimated the historical changes even more, as would the dominance model. The modified dominance model tells very much the same story as the individual model, with a decline of the influence of the dominant parent (who in the beginning is more likely to be the father) and a rise of influence of the subordinate parent (more likely to have been the mother). However, the explained variance of this model is smaller than that of the individual model, which is also easier to interpret.

Fig. 5. Estimated trend of the influence of parental status on respondent's status according the different models, 1985-2006 (MD, Modified Dominance Model; IND, Individual Model)



Leaving aside the joined model, which represents the average between the individual and the conventional model, the comparison between the outcomes of the different models shown in figure 5 allows us to cluster our models into two groups. The first one concerns the conventional and the dominance model. According to the previous, father's influence on respondents' status is strong at the beginning of the period of observation and declines rather steeply during the following 21 years. Should our conclusion on the degree of openness of the Italian society between 1985 and 2006 be based on this model, we would say that Italy has undergone a period of increasing openness, during which the influence of ascriptive variables (as indicated by fathers' occupational status) has become weaker. The dominance model would allow us to draw more or less the same conclusion: the downward trend here is a bit less strong, and the initial influence of the dominant on respondents' occupation is weaker; nonetheless the trends are clearly similar and the ending point of the two models is the same.

The second group includes the modified dominance, the individual and the anti-conventional models. In the individual model, fathers' influence declines very rapidly, being quite high at the beginning of the period of observation and getting much lower at its end. The modified dominance model estimates more or less the same decrease rate as for the influence of

the dominant parent. In the case of mothers – either as the non-dominant parent, or part of the parental couple – the trend estimated by the two models is almost identical. Differences can be found in the intercepts, since in the modified dominance model the influence of the lowest status parent is a bit higher than that of mothers in the individual model. The anti-conventional model is essentially homogeneous with the individual and the modified dominance model as for the increasingly important role of mothers over time; however, here the trend is significantly less steep than in the other two models, and it starts from a much higher point, since it accounts for all the influence of the family of origin.

On this basis our conclusion would be that, while fathers are losing much of their influence on their offspring's status, the family on the whole is not, since mothers have decidedly gained importance over the last decades.

8. Further tests

Our conclusions may still be biased by the fact that we estimated all models on the subset of cases for which we have valid information on the occupational status of both parents. As anticipated earlier, we performed some further analyses to examine the robustness of our findings. Table 7 shows the results we get when we estimate our models on a broader selection of cases, as well as introducing some controls concerning the Bank of Italy surveys. We then re-estimate the individual model with three control variables that are of possible concern: *a*) whether the data originate from the Bank of Italy dataset, which constitute more than half of our data, and which show – as we argued – some peculiarities when compared to the other surveys in the data set; *b*) whether the results would have been any different, had we restricted our models to currently working women and men; *c*) whether the results would have been different, if we would not have restricted our analyses to the sub-sample of cases for which a valid occupation code for both father and mother is available.

As for the first point, we introduce in our models a dummy variable that codes whether the data originate from the Bank of Italy (BI) panel files, and that interacts with the effects of father's and mother's occupational status (tab. 7, column G). The results show that on average the BI data have a somewhat higher mean respondent's ISEI than the other data. Note that the model also contains a control for year of survey, so that this result cannot be attributed to the somewhat more recent age of the BI data. However, the interactions with father's and mother's ISEI are far from significant. The Bank of Italy data neither show a different trend over time compared to the rest of the dataset, nor do they influence any other part of the model in a

Tab. 7. Occupational attainment by mother's and father's occupation in various subsamples

Constant	Range	G Controlled for BI data & WORK N = 11.513	H Valid father's occupation N = 29.137	I Valid mothers' occupation N = 12.560	J Missing values imputed N = 34.597
		38,349	41,323	42,182	41,026
		(77,7)	(182,1)	(117,1)	(148,8)
FEMALE	0,1	0,882	1,023	0,646	1,221
		(1,9)	(3,5)	(1,5)	(4,6)
AGE	0,1	12,595	10,765	10,976	11,037
		(22,2)	(33,0)	(20,7)	(36,6)
FEMALE* AGE		-1,875	-1,564	-2,071	-1,485
		(-2,2)	(-3,0)	(-2,6)	(-3,1)
TIME	0,1	-6,803	-6,583	-7,373	-6,492
		(-16,2)	(-27,5)	(-19,0)	(-27,1)
MOTH WORK	0,1				-0,139
					(0,9)
FATH WORK	0,1				0,149
					(-1,1)
F-ISEI	10-90 Cent.	0,224	0,195		0,183
		(7,3)	(15,6)		(14,9)
F-ISEI* FEMALE		-0,050	-0,046		-0,053
		(-2,6)	(-4,7)		(-5,7)
F-ISEI* TIME		-0,133	-0,045		-0,083
		(-4,1)	(-2,5)		(-4,9)
M-ISEI	10-90 Cent.	0,034		0,126	0,003
		(1,1)		(6,6)	(0,3)
M-ISEI* FEMALE		0,028		0,003	0,020
		(1,5)		(0,2)	(2,2)
M-ISEI* TIME		0,084		0,039	0,050
		(2,6)		(1,4)	(2,9)
EDUCYR	0,21 Cent.	2,066	2,180	2,291	2,200
		(26,6)	(48,6)	(32,3)	(49,8)
EDUCYR* FEMALE		0,175	0,247	0,189	0,251
		(2,7)	(6,4)	(3,1)	(6,9)
EDUCYR* TIME		0,010	-0,046	-0,182	-0,067
		(0,0)	(-0,7)	(-1,8)	(-1,1)
Adj R^2		0,443	0,431	0,427	0,425

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients with T-values in parentheses. Model G contain significant main effects for WORK (3,012, t = 9,0) and BANK (0,481, t = 2,2) and non-significant interactions of these variables and F-ISEI and M-ISEI.

substantial way. Then we can conclude that, despite the fact that the BI data are a fairly large part of our dataset, and that its measurement of occupation is rather crude, this brings no appreciable consequence for our results.

The second step was to control whether we were justified in including in our data those respondents who were not employed at the time each survey was carried out, but for whom we have valid information referring to a previous occupation. In particular, we want to test whether conclusions as for parents' influence on respondent's status are significantly different for these respondents, relative to conclusions drawn on the currently employed respondents. Thus we introduce into our model a dummy variable, WORK, which distinguishes those who have a current employment (at time of survey) from those who haven't, and which interacts with father's and mother's ISEI. Since over 85% of men in our active sample are employed, the results primarily pertain to women (of whom 71% is currently employed). As we see in table 7 (model G, notes), the main effect of WORK is positive and significant, which may mean that primarily lower status women have withdrawn from the labour market. This being so, introducing the control variable and its interaction with mother's and father's ISEI does not significantly change the model. Therefore, we can affirm that there was indeed no reason to exclude women and men who had already left the labour market at the time of survey. This finding can be thought to support the claim that Heath and Britten (1984) made as for the importance of considering not only women's current participation in labour market, but also their potential for such participation. In other words, women's previous occupation may be seen as an indicator (among others) of that potential, thus bringing additional and relevant information to the analysis of their role in the process of social stratification.

Third and finally, we have re-estimated the conventional and anti-conventional models on a wider subset of data, defined by the availability of a valid occupation code respectively for fathers (N = 29.137, column H) and mothers (N = 12.560, column I). Results show that the anti-conventional model remains essentially unchanged, while the conventional model here shows a stronger effect of father's occupation and a less steep decline of this effect over time (-0,045 here, against -0,084, tab. 6, column A). Since the only difference between the two versions of the conventional model is the way we selected the cases (all cases with a valid code for father's occupation, versus cases with a valid occupation code for both parents), this suggests that parental families with a working mother are different from those with a mother who is not gainfully employed. However, while being different, model H actually underlines the conclusion obtained on the smaller subset of cases we commented on in the previous section: the effect of father's occupation is giving way to the effect of mother's occupation, once she becomes or remains employed (which is increasingly the case over the period of observation). In order to obtain a fuller picture of the trends emerging over all families, we have imputed the missing values for both father's and mother's occupation using nearest neighbor hot-deck estimation. In column J on the full 34.597 cases of working men and women we introduce these augmented versions of father's and mother's ISEI together with a control variable that denotes whether parents' occupational status has been imputed or not. Again, this leaves the main conclusion about the historical trends unchanged: the effect of father's occupation is historically declining, while the influence of mother's occupation is on the rise between 1985 and 2006.

9. Conclusions and discussion

The research questions we have asked can be answered in the following way:

1. Mothers are often and increasingly economically active in Italian parental families. Depending upon the data source and the specific question asked, we found that between 30 and 40% of mothers have been gainfully employed during respondent's childhood or at her/his later age. We think that this number may be a rather strong underestimate, as probably many more mothers have been active in the labour market before marriage or before raising their children, and we see no good reason why such previous occupations would not matter for respondents' socio-economic achievement. Again, this goes to the direction of what Heath and Britten (1984) claim. A particular strong finding in our data is that we see a significant trend over birth cohorts towards more working mothers, irrespective of the age of respondent and question format.

2. *a*) On average we find fathers and mothers to have similar occupational status, also in terms of means and standard deviations. Both fathers and mothers have lower occupational status than respondents. For respondents, we find a significantly higher status for women than for men, which we attribute primarily to selective (early) withdrawal from the labour market. This is confirmed by the analysis that compares the occupational status of currently and formerly employed women.

b) Mother's occupation can be classified with the same scheme and scaled by the same metric (the International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status) as father's and respondent's occupation. We did not find a stronger concentration of mothers in only a few occupational categories, more than we found for fathers. Then, though further tests would be needed to fully confirm this assumption, throughout our analyses we did not come across any evidence in favour of the argument that mother's occupa-

tion, or female occupations in general, should be analysed in a different way than men's occupations.

c) When the differences in occupational status between mothers and fathers are interpreted in terms of a "dominant" and a "subordinate" parent, we find a clear rise (over birth cohorts) of dominant mothers. By the most recent birth cohort, the share of parental couples with a dominant mother is about one third, as much as that of dominant fathers and that of balanced parental couples.

3. Both father's and mother's occupational status have a significant direct effect on respondent's occupational status, over and above the indirect effect via education. On average, the effect of fathers is somewhat stronger than that of mothers, but there are significant and substantial interactions to qualify this conclusion. First, we found clear evidence of gender role modelling, with fathers being more important for sons and mothers more important for daughters. Second, we found divergent historical trends: the influence of father's occupation is becoming smaller over time, and that of mother's occupation is definitely on the rise. By the time of the most recent available survey, i.e. 2006, father's and mother's influence are about equal.

When comparing the individual model to the conventional model, the joined model and the dominance model, as they were proposed in the 1980s British discussion on mother's class and by Korupp, Ganzeboom and Van Der Lippe (2002), we find clear evidence in support of the model that treats mothers and fathers individually. The individual model is not only superior in term of explained variance: it is the only one among the contenders that brings out the historical and gender-role interactions in a clear and interpretable way.

4. Including mother's occupation into occupational attainment models changes the picture of structure and trend of the Italian mobility regime: in other words, different measurement strategies for social origins entail different substantive conclusions. Omitting mothers from the analysis would suggest a more open Italian society and also a society that is moving toward openness quicker than it actually is. To put this in a different way, the trends that we find can be interpreted saying that mothers are replacing fathers in reproducing family status into their children, both sons and daughters.

As for discussion, we point to three important restrictions of our analyses that may serve as directions for future research.

First, our analysis is exclusively concerned with the *direct* effects of father's and mother's occupation on respondent's occupational status attainment. The *total* effects of parental occupation are also composed of the indirect effects via education. While we controlled education on our models, we did not explicitly model the indirect effect. Such an analysis would be best conducted by organizing the data by birth cohorts, since educational attainment and its determinants change by cohort rather than by period. We need

to suspend this to a future analysis; nonetheless at this point we can recall the finding of the present analysis that the education-occupation connection is significantly stronger for women than for men. This makes it plausible that the total effect of parental background on respondent's occupational attainment – when mothers are taken into account – is stronger for women relative to men.

Second, we dealt only superficially with the effects of mother's employment on respondents' employment, and particularly of female respondents. There appears to be an additional mother-daughter reproduction concerning the participation in the labour marker, over and above the intergenerational reproduction of occupational status. To analyse this phenomenon more carefully, it would be welcome to have better data on both mother's and (female) respondents' employment careers – data that we plan to collect in the future.

Third and finally, we dealt only with intergenerational transfer of the socio-economic status of occupations. This is related, but not identical, to casting this transfer in terms of social class or occupational prestige. Moreover, our models do not take into account that men and in particular women do not only model themselves on their father and mother with respect to socio-economic status, but also with respect to the gender-typing of occupation. This is an issue that may or may not confound some of our findings, depending upon the nature of the correlation between the gender typing and status of occupations (Korupp, Sanders, Ganzeboom, 2002).

We intend to address these issues in future research.

Notes

[1] Earlier evidence concerning this claim can be found, among others, in Ellis (1952), Etzioni (1969) and Epstein (1970).

[2] This approach actually follows what had been done before by Svalastoga (1959), who in his research assigned to women a social status derived from their own occupation when it scored higher than that of their husband, and otherwise followed the conventional practice.

[3] The acronym stands for *Progetto di ricerca di interesse nazionale*, i.e. research project of national relevance, co-funded by the Italian Ministry of University and by the proponents.

[4] See for example Watson, Barth (1964).

[5] EQ = 1-((k*sq-1)/(k-1)), where k is the number of categories; sq is calculated by the following equation: $sq = \sum_{j=1}^{k} p_j^2$, where p_j is the proportion of the jth category. EQ ranges between 0 and 1.

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